Plain Language Summary
RS#5 Year 3
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Making Supported Employment Work for Job Seekers with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities: Lessons from Job Coaches

BASED ON THIS RESEARCH STUDY CITATION:
Schall, C., Avellone, L., Claude, C., Ham, W., & Wehman, P. (In Press). Employment support professionals' perspectives of the essential elements of supported employment for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin.

IMPORTANT WORDS:

Fidelity Scale: A checklist used to see if a program is being followed the way it works best.

Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD): A type of disability that starts during childhood and affects how a person grows, learns, communicates, or handles everyday tasks and activities.

Job Coach: A person hired by an SE service agency who is trained to help people with IDD get jobs in their community.

Service Agency or Agency: A business that hires people, like job coaches, to help people with IDD. They also make sure the job coaches they hire get training and offer good services.

Supported Employment (SE): A service that helps adults with IDD get real paying jobs they want in their communities. It also helps them learn and be successful in their job.

OVERVIEW:

Even though the government has made rules and provided money to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) find good jobs, people with IDD still struggle to find work that pays them minimum wage or higher and lets them work in jobs they like.

Research has shown that supported employment (SE) is a good way to help job seekers with IDD get good jobs in their community. Even though people with IDD want SE to help them get a job, they sometimes have trouble finding job coaches who know the best ways to help them get a job they want. The problem is that there is no consistent way to tell what job coaches should do.

We decided to develop an SE fidelity scale for job seekers with IDD. A fidelity scale is a tool or checklist to see if a program is doing what it should do. Before we can develop the SE Fidelity Scale for Job Seekers with IDD, we must figure out what is high-quality SE. In this research study, we asked 19 experienced job coaches and their service agency bosses across the U.S. what makes SE work, what barriers hold it back and how we should help job seekers with IDD. This is what they told us.

WHAT THE JOB COACH SAID:

1. High-Quality Job Coaching Has 4 Main Steps

- Step 1: Job Seeker Profile (Getting to know you). Instead of giving job seekers with IDD stressful tests, coaches get to know them by watching them try different fun activities and tasks in their community. This helps coaches learn what the person is good at and what kind of job they would enjoy.

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- Step 2: Job Development (Finding the right match). Job coaches talk to local businesses to find a job that fits the person's skills. They tell bosses that people with disabilities are great workers. This helps bosses and businesses learn that hiring qualified job seekers with IDD is good for their business.

- Step 3: Job-Site Training (Getting help learning the job). Job coaches teach new workers how to do their tasks. But as the worker gets better, the coach steps back so the worker learns to ask their real boss or coworkers for help instead. This helps the new employee learn in the best way for them.

- Step 4: Follow-Along (Checking in on you while you work). This means that the job coach keeps checking in to make sure everything is going ok with the job. Coaches keep in touch with both the worker and the boss to make sure everything goes smoothly and to help the worker get raises or promotions later. Also, if the employee gets new job tasks, they can ask their job coach to come back in to help them learn new skills.

We also learned about ways job coaching agencies can make sure that job seekers and employees get excellent SE services. These lessons help us learn ways to increase the success of SE.

2. Important Lessons for Success

- One Coach Is Best: Having the same coach helps a person through all four steps and works much better than switching coaches halfway through. That way, the person with IDD and the business builds trust with the job coach.

- Help Both Sides: A good job coach helps the worker succeed and helps the business owner run a good business. That way, everyone wins!

- Bad Job Coaching Hurts Everyone: If a job coach does a poor job or quits suddenly, business owners get frustrated. This makes them less likely to hire other people with disabilities in the future.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN NEXT?

Right now, there is no easy rulebook to check if a job coaching agency is doing a good job. We will use this research study to help us to build the SE Fidelity Scale for Job Seekers with IDD.

This checklist will help us make sure that job coaches get better training, make sure service agencies give high-quality SE services, and help more adults with IDD get great jobs!

FOR MORE ON THIS PROJECT, VISIT:

https://idd.vcurrtc.org/research/rs5.cfm

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